

Outdoor Recreation (N. Ireland)

Trustees Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, present the annual report together with the consolidated financial statements and auditors' report of the charitable company for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Structure, governance and management

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of management committee

The directors of the company are also charity trustees. The directors are elected to serve for an initial three year period. The directors give their time voluntarily and receive only out of pocket expenses from the company with the exception of Caro-Lynne Ferris whose post as Company Secretary of Outdoor Recreation (N. Ireland) is paid.

Risk management

The directors have conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for the authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff volunteers, clients and visitors to the centre. These procedures are reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.

Organisational structure

A scheme of delegation is in place and the day-to-day responsibility for the provision of services rests with the Company Secretary / Executive Director. This is delegated via a Senior Management Team with responsibility for four key units - Place Shaping, Strategic Projects, Communication & Training and Business Support.

This structure has been in place since September 2022. Outdoor Recreation NI has committed to carry out a structure review every three years to ensure its structures, and people processes are not only fit for purpose today, but more importantly are ready and prepared for the organisations ongoing success and growth. It is therefore envisaged the next review will be completed by September 2025.

Trustees and officers

The trustees and officers serving during the year and since the year end were as follows:

Trustees:

Ms F Kane

Mr D Stelfox

Ms E Trainor

Dr C Ferris

Dr D Hughes

Mr R Magowan

Mr J Hewitt

Mr J Porter

Mr R Millar

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Chairman:

Mr D Stelfox

Secretary:

Dr C Ferris

Treasurer:

Mr R Millar

Objectives and activities

1. CHAMPIONING THE OUTDOORS

Strategic aim:

There is increased awareness of the benefits that outdoor recreation brings to individuals, communities and Northern Ireland as a whole and increased focus on the importance of outdoor recreation within policy and practice at both national and local levels.

Achievements

Key achievements for the year are summarised as follows:

- Engaged in regular meetings with EMFG, NIEA, eNGO Sector.
- Attended All Party Working Group on Cycling, DoH Obesity Group, Outdoor Tourism Partnership and Sport and Physical Activity Outcomes Based Accountability Workshops
- Two formal partnership agreements in place - UK Trails Project led by Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland and SLA with URFC to deliver outputs of Sports System Investment - Governing Bodies 2023/24.
- Acted in an advisory role, provided support and offered advice to numerous organisations on a wide range of subjects e.g access, trail signage, trail infrastructure, MTB signage etc;
- One formal partnership agreement imminent - SLA with the Outdoor Partnership relating to the provision of financial administration services for the Opening Doors to the Outdoors UK Programme in the Sperrins.
- Acted in an advisory role, provided support and offered advice to numerous organisations on a wide range of subjects e.g access, trail signage, trail infrastructure, MTB signage etc.
- Responded to the following consultation documents - DoH - Obesity Strategic Framework - 'Healthy Futures' and DfE - Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- Acted as Secretariat to the National Outdoor Recreation Forum (NORF). Met twice during the year.
- POMI Strategic Stakeholder Event at Stormont hosted by Minister for Health, Robin Swann.
- Animated video created with POMNI data on outdoor recreation benefits.
- Tutorial webinar delivered on accessing and using POMNI data and deep-dive analyses. Deep Dive Reports and Council Factsheets available on Outscape website.
- Greenspace NI map officially launched at Armagh Planetarium with on-going refinements.
- Two training events held on how to use the Greenspace NI map.
- 3 Social Return on Investment Studies (SROI) complete for Tobar Mhuire, Gosford and Seaford Plantations.

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2. DELIVERING TRAINING AND SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Strategic aim:

The outdoor recreation sector is better equipped to plan, deliver, manage and promote outdoor recreation initiatives to a high standard. There is an increasing focus on innovative, sustainable and participant-led approaches to outdoor recreation.

Achievements

Key achievements for the year are summarised as follows:

- Acted as the Secretariat to the UK and Ireland Outdoor Recreation Network (ORN).
- Acted as the Secretariat to the UK and Ireland Visitor Safety Group (VSG).
- Outdoor Recreation HUB <http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/hub/blogs/>; 15 news/blogs published, 22 e-zines distributed. Regular LinkedIn and Twitter Updates
- Delivered 4 webinars and 1 conference: 'Visitor Management Through Signage' - 65 attended, 'Marketing the Outdoors' - 35 attended, 'Community Engagement: A Fireside Chat with the Experts' - 38 attended, 'Applying Accessibility Guidance to Northern Ireland' - 73 attended, 'Inspiring Exceptional Outdoor Places' conference - 101 attended including speakers and staff
- Review on-going of Principles and Standards for Trail Development
- Ecological Annex to Trail Document - complete.
- Community Trail Development Toolkit - complete

3. PLANNING AND DEVELOPING QUALITY EXPERIENCES

Strategic aim:

A wide range of high quality, sustainable and participant focused outdoor recreation experiences allowing people to connect and engage with nature are in place across Northern Ireland.

Scoping Studies / Feasibility Studies/ Masterplans:

Completed

- Feasibility study for the development of a pilot of multi-use horse trails suitable for off road horse riding in NMDDC - DAERA.
- Silent Valley Masterplan - NI Water.
- Ring of Gullion Access Plan - NMDDC.
- Masterplans for Woodburn Forest, Portglenone Forest and Glenarm Forests - MEABC.
- Strangford Lough Blueway Feasibility Study - ANDBC.
- Cycle Trail Criteria for Ireland - Sport Ireland.
- Tourism NI EAGS Walks - Tourism NI.
- Slieve Beagh Feasibility Study - FODC, Cavan CC Monaghan CC.
- Columban Way Feasibility Study - Carlow CoCo + 8 partner councils.
- Four Points Feasibility Study - Kerry CoCo, Donegal CoCo & ANDBC.

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- Slí Cholmcille Feasibility Study - Donegal CoCo & DCSDC.
- Bord na Móna Recreation Strategy - Bord na Mona.
- County Outdoor Recreation Plans - Guidelines - DRCD.
- Quality Framework for outdoor recreation amenities -Roscommon CoCo.
- Recreation Masterplan for Donamon - Roscommon CoCo.
- Blueway Brand Signage Guidelines - SI & Waterways Ireland.
- High Level Spatial Masterplan for Convent Lands, Monaghan - Monaghan CoCo.
- Regenerative Tourism Cross Border Project - Donegal CoCo & FODC.
- Traad Point Masterplan - MUDC.
- Tullaghoge Fort Access and interpretation Study- MUDC.
- Bohernabreena Reservoir and Waterworks Spatial Masterplan - Uisce Éireann - Irish Water.
- Ballyhoura - Outdoor Recreation Trails Masterplan - Ballyhoura Development CLG.
- Boorin Nature Reserve - Path Specification Survey - Ulster Wildlife Trust.

On-going

- Camlough Mountain Masterplan -NMDDC
- Minerstown Visitor Management Plan - NMDDC
- Fathom Forest Scoping Study (NMDDC)
- Mote Park Development Project - Roscommon CoCo

Community Trails

- 3 trail scoping studies completed (Lough Rea, Sheeptown and Mayobridge) - NMDDC
- 2 trail feasibility studies completed - Tullyhogue Community (MUDC) and Hilltown (NMDDC)
- 2 trail feasibility studies underway - Inch Abbey and Forkhill River Walk -NMDDC.
- 3 trails progressing to planning - Saul to Lough Money, Tievcrom and Glendesha Phase 2 - Slievbrack - NMDDC.
- planning applications submitted - Janes Shore, Jackson Folly, Tipperary Wood -NMDDC.

Other

- Faughan Valley Sculpture Trail -complete

Research

- Participation figures gathered on a quarterly basis for Castleward, Divis, Gosford and the Community Trails in; Cloghey, Tobar Mhuire, Bunkers Hill, Saul GAC, Ballynahinch Rugby Club, Drumkeeragh Forest, Tievenadarragh Forest, Corry Wood, Seaforde Plantations, Carnagh Forest, Slan's Graveyard, Darkley Forest, Glendesha Forest, Daisy Hill, Aughrim Hill, Glaswater Wood,

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4. INCREASING AWARENESS

Strategic aim:

A consistently high level of accurate information on outdoor recreation is widely available, leading to an increase awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities by both the local population and visitors to Northern Ireland.

Achievements

Key achievements for the year are summarised as follows:

- On-going refinement of OutmoreNI.com.
- Work on-going to make keep WalkNI, CanoeNI, MountainbikeNI, OutdoorNI up to date and consumer friendly.
- C.320,000 unique visitors to the websites WalkNI - a 35% increase on 22/23.
- 10,000 annual web visitors to Ulster Way website - a 35% increase on 2022/23.
- WalkNI Awards received over 700 votes.
- New MountainbikeNI website developed and launched.
- C. 37,000k followers of WalkNI through social media channels of Facebook, Instagram and twitter.
- C.32,000k followers of MountainbikeNI through social media channels of Facebook, Instagram and twitter.
- C.11,000k followers of OutmoreNI through social media channels of Facebook, Instagram and twitter.
- Right Side of Outside Campaign - Phase 3 delivered to reiterate key messages to encourage responsible use of the outdoors.
- Get Wet campaign- delivered 31 events. 5,000 followers on social media
- Get Wet Stay Safe - 1,130 people attended courses. SUP and sit on kayaking the most popular activity.

5. WIDENING, INCREASING AND SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION

Strategic aim:

The number of people participating in outdoor recreation in NI continues to rise

Achievements

Key achievements for the year are summarised as follows:

- Peace + funding programme opened in March 24 - work on-going to prepare an application for submission. Project involves 19 partners - 11 from NI and 8 from the Republic of Ireland. Project estimated at c. £7.5million - three-year participation programme. Covers all of NI except area within Belfast City Council area and the 6 border counties - Lough, Cavan, Monaghan, Leitrim, Donegal and Sligo.

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Financial review

The Charity has had a slight decrease in funds of £54,271 (2023: increase of £99,553) as a result of total income for the year of £1,689,473 (2023: £1,876,210) and total expenditure for the year of £1,743,744 (2023: £1,776,657).

Contingencies

The company is not registered for VAT and provides a range of services. The company's subsidiary is registered for both UK and Irish VAT. The company is currently reviewing its position in relation to its income and depending on the outcome of this review and decisions made by the group there may be a company VAT liability and/or changes to the service provision. This is complex matter involving specialist advisors and at the date of the approval of the accounts this review has not been completed and its outcome is unknown.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of Outdoor Recreation (N. Ireland) for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards, comprising FRS 102 have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that can disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information. The trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

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Reappointment of auditor

The auditors RBCA Limited are deemed to be reappointed under section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

09 Jan 2025

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on and signed on its behalf by:

Caro-lyne Ferris

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Dr C Ferris
Company Secretary and Trustee

Dawson Stelfox

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Mr D Stelfox
Chairman and Trustee